701 students at the Minsk officers school were also recruited exclusively
563 from among Belorussians, /15/ and all the training as well as the commands were given in Belorussian. A special corps of specialists on Belorussia, with the experienced philologist, Baranovskii, as their leader, was selected for work in the officers' school. All the military regulations of the Red Army were translated into Belorussian. But the Belorussianization of these two divisions was sharply curtailed after 1930, the Belorussian specialists were fired from the officers school, and a significant number of them were subsequently arrested together with their leader. By 1932 no traces remained of the Belorussianization of these two territorial divisions, The Second Division, quartered in Minsk, had its name changed from Territorial to Experienced Regular Division, and the Belorussianization of parts of the Red Army was pronounced a harmful diversionary activity.

At one point, in order to strengthen the Soviet state, the
563 slogan of "going to the soil" was promoted in Belorussia. The main
647 reason for this was to fill the Soviet state apparatus with local workers independent of their nationality, and by this it was intended that the local Party workers, being native inhabitants of the area and knowing the language, customs, and way of life of the Belorussians, would be the more close to the national masses. However this campaign did not have any widespread success and was swallowed up by ensuing campaigns which were of a broader nature.

Propaganda among the Peasants

665 In 1924, a movement began in Belorussia under the noisy title of "Let's face the land," and it involved the mass dispatch of responsible workers from the centers into the rayon and village soviets for agitation and organizational work there. When the NEP had attained a steady tempo the peasantry found itself in a very
484 difficult situation. The prices of agricultural products were low and those of factory made products immeasurably high. For example, a peasant had to pay no less than 320 kilograms of grain for an ordinary Tula samovar. At the time the hard and reliable Soviet chervonets had acquired a solid position in the economy. But the peasants had no
665 chervontsi . . . To raise the depressed mood of the peasantry propa-
557 gandists were sent out for extended periods, and some of them were even left in the rayons for permanent work as responsible Party leaders. It was decided simultaneously to advance non-Party peasants and factory workers to responsible positions. Such a new worker was

557 665 called a 'vydvizhenets' /promoted worker/. Generally such workers were appointed as deputies of various kinds; independent work was not given to them /16/ because of their non-Party status and the fear of distortions in the Party line . . . To tell the truth they often had to sail with the wind, orient themselves according to Party workers, and compromise with their convictions, especially in settling peasant problems. The leaders of the Belorussian national movement made use of this well-advertised and all-embracing campaign[1] to send out their best propagandists for further work in planting the Soviet state apparatus "in the soil" and especially to select vydvizhenets workers /for their own ends/. It would be possible to mention many successful vydvizhenets, as examples. For instance in the Slutskiy Okrug, the peasant vydvizhenets Fedorovich enjoyed unquestionable authority, occupying the post of deputy president of the okrug executive committee. The peasant vydvizhenets Dubovtsev made such a favorable impression with his work that as a result he even became Deputy President of the Belorussian Supreme Soviet. He possessed the necessary qualifications in administrative work, was modest both in his personal life and on the job, and a promoter of the national work. Part of the vydvizhenets group returned to their former jobs in the kolkhozes and factories, and a very insignificant portion entered the Party.

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647 The official organs which had the job of guiding the national work were the so-called National Commissions in the center and the district centers. The staff of a National Committee was composed of representatives of the separate nationalities. However they had no practical or organizational significance. The work was carried on outside their auspices and without their guidance. It was almost a dead superstructure of which there were and are many in the Soviet system.

Belorussians in Poland

661 563 Everything done by the nationalists in the B. S. S. R. had a colossal influence upon the Belorussians, especially upon the youth and intelligentsia, living in western Belorussia, which was under Polish rule. There they had no right even having been deprived of the right to acquire property. Without renouncing its nationality the intelligentsia could not find work. The Belorussian primary and high schools were closed, although they were

[1] [To raise the morale of the peasants caught in an unfavorable economic situation. Cf. p. 19, Cat. 116--Analyst]

661 kept in operation through private donations. Belorussian students
533 could not enter the higher schools. The national social organization "Belorusskaia Gramada," which had 120,000 members, was closed and its leaders tried and imprisoned. The Orthodox clergy had to use Polish to preach in the churches and to teach the Law of God in the schools. The population of western Belorussia knew that in the B. S. S. R. a state was being built, that /17/ the official language was Belorussian, that a Belorussian Academy of Sciences, a State University, and other institutions of higher learning were in existence and that admission to them did not present any particular difficulties--on the contrary there were the so-called workers' high schools which prepared those who lacked secondary education for admission into the universities. National theaters were in operation, and literature
661 and poetry flourished. The Soviet press, which penetrated into western
166 Belorussia, as well as the radio and underground Communist organizations intensified their propaganda about the work in the B. S. S. R.. The Soviet Consulate in Warsaw, by using the Deputy Consul Ul'ianov who was himself from a Minsk family, generously supplied dollars to finance anti-Polish propaganda, the pro-Communist press, and various organizations in western Belorussia. As a result of this, hundreds of young people streamed across the border into the B. S. S. R., illegally and at great risk and danger to themselves, in the hopes of getting into the bright lecture halls of the University of Belorussia. The intelligentsia also crossed the border to find work and to find some scope for their abilities. How much bitter disillusionment there was after 1930, how much inconsolable grief and sorrow for their unfulfilled hopes and broken young lives. Led by their enthusiasm, they trustingly dashed into the perfidious and deceiving Soviet flame. Who could have supposed then that this great constructive work would be pitilessly crushed and that thousands of Belorussians would perish in the cellars of the N. K. V. D. or in concentration camps.

First Secretaries of the Central Committee of the Community Party of Belorussia

● 665 Up to 1930 there were several first secretaries of the Communist Party of Belorussia. All of them were envoys of the Kremlin, in fact plenipotentiaries of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union--guardians, preservers and exponents of the general line of the

165 Politburo. Thus it was already determined that the first secretaries of the Communist Party were always sent to Belorussia and were never Belorussians. Each of these envoys had a greater or lesser effect upon the course of the national work. There were no Belorussian Communists with pre-revolutionary records as most of them had not entered the Party before 1920.

The First Secretary of the Party from 1921 to 1924 was the Pole, Waclaw Bogutskii (1). In those times large scale national work

1. Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia /Large Soviet Encyclopedia, 1927, Vol. VI, p. 623.

had not progressed further than a gathering of forces and appraisal of the situation. Bogutskii had no special influence of the lives of the Belorussian people. His activity consisted mainly of speeches at meetings and assemblies, and as an orator of that type he was not bad. After a short period Bogutskii /18/ was replaced by Asatkin (Viadimirskii) (1) who was Russian by nationality. He did not prove

1. Malaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopedia /Small Soviet Encyclopedia/ 1929 Edition, Vol. IV, p. 364.

anything special. Under him the Vitebsk and Mogilevsk Guberniyas were joined to the B. S. S. R., and after a short while Asatkin was recalled to Moscow. After him came Krinitskii, also Russian. He carried on his Party work for almost three years (1924-1927) (2).

2. Malaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia/ Small Soviet Encylopedia/ 1929 Edition, Vol. IV, p. 364.

By nature Krinitskii was a careerist--showing little independence in his work and always orienting himself by the Kremlin. At that time Belorussian influence predominated in the Party, and Krinitskii was alone. To further their own interests the Belorussians made use of the Kremlin's slogan concerning the building of a national culture that was "national in form and socialist in content." Krinitskii could not obstruct the national work--what was important to him was somehow to keep an eye on it to make sure that the culture preserved a socialist content. Krinitskii had no authority

665 among the Party rank-and-file. He was recalled to Moscow to the agitation and propaganda section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. After his removal to Moscow he quickly forgot about the work in Belorussia. While director of the agitation and propaganda section in the Kremlin, Krinitskii at one conference sharply rebuked the president of Belorussia who was making a speech in Belorussian since he had not fully mastered Russian. Krinitskii reproved him, recommending that he speak in Russian.

After Krinitskii, in 1928, the First Secretary was the Latvian, Knorin. His activity left a definite mark, the more so since the Kremlin twice sent him to Belorussia as secretary. Knorin got acquainted with the leaders of the national movement and understood the strivings of the Belorussians for national rebirth, aided in the national work, and supported the initiative of the Belorussians. After he left, in 1928, Jan Gamarnik (1) an Austrian by nationality /19/

1. The Large Soviet Encyclopedia states that in his youth Gamarnik lived in Kiev. In Minsk he was considered a Czech. As we know, Gamarnik was subsequently shot together with Tukhachevskii. Cf. Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopedia, /Large Soviet Encyclopedia/ 1929 Edition, Vol. XIV, p. 456.

became First Secretary. Correct and tactful, a good orator and organizer, he did not introduce any changes in the national work. Gamarnik did not become intimate with anyone, especially in Belorussia. His activity did not last long--first appointed Director of the Political Administration of the Belorussian Military District he was then transferred to the post of Director of the Political Administration of the Red Army. In about 1928 or 1929 the Kremlin sent the Estonian, Gei, as secretary to Belorussia.

665 186 In a comparatively short period the national work in Belorussia had carved a broad path for itself. The rebirth of a national culture was an indisputable fact; cadres of youth had been trained and posted all throughout the state apparatus. The region was healing itself of the wounds inflicted by wars and occupations; it appeared that the Communism of the war years had gone, never to return. There was some thought of conquering new positions since the national work and all its measures had found unquestioning support among the broad masses of the Belorussian people... The Party leadership,

665 sent by the Politburo in the persons of the first secretaries, in the
186 majority of cases adopted a strictly formal attitude toward the national work. It is possible that only Knorin really understood the situation. Secretary Krinitskii learned Belorussian and occasionally made speeches in it, but even so it was only to produce a good impression on the Kremlin and in order to assist his Party career in this way, that he did it.

The First Victims

Up to 1930, there had only been one trial aimed directly at a
161 nationalist. In 1926, Iu. Listopad, a non-Party teacher of Belorussian in the high schools, was arrested in Slutsk. He was tried in Minsk for organizing some sort of plot against the Soviet Authority. The trial was open to the public, and there were lawyers for both the presecution and defense. The students gave Listopad stormy ovations, and flowers were even brought to him during the trial. However the whole affair was cleverly and insidiously organized. The judges were members of the Belorussian intelligentsia and the Public Prosecutor, a well-known nationalist writer, D. Zhilunovich. /20/ It was all so well arranged that even Listopad's warmest supporters were forced to judge and condemn him. He was sentenced to five years in a reformatory--as the prisons were still called at that time. The shadows continued to thicken even after Listopad's trial had been forgotten. The twilight of the NEP was coming, and by the end of 1928 the cities were beginning to feel the shortage of agricultural products. In the Ukraine and other grain producing areas the Soviet regime was beginning to organize the first Machine and Tractor Stations (MTS), the forerunners of the collectivization which was soon to sweep over the peasantry.

In the beginning of 1931, Professor Vsevolod Ignatovskii, an academician and the leader of the Belorussian nationalists, fell a victim of the B. P. U. He had been called in for interrogation and afterwards shot himself in his own apartment. (1)

1. The suicide of Professor Ignatovskii was the last, as well as the most decisive act in the particular "case" of the S. V. B. * with which the G. P. U. had intended to connect him. The "case" was closed, and all those implicated were sent into exile in administrative functions--only the Communists Balitskii, Prishchepov, Al. Adamovich, and Il'iuchenos /sic/ were sent to concentration camps.

* Belorussian abbreviation, Cf. p. 6 meaning:Union for the liberation of Belorussia.

661 pitilessly everything that had been created as a labor of love during the NEP. New people were needed, and Prishchepov was classed as an enemy of the people, a wrecker, middleman, protector of the kulaks, and a promulgator of the private homesteads and small villages which were so harmful to the socialist forms of agriculture. In official documents and propaganda his work was contemptuously called the "prishchepovshchina." However, the besmirched activities of Prishchepov the People's Commissar of Agriculture, left a happy and lasting memory among the Belorussian peasantry.

The death of the academician, Professor Ignatovskii, and the arrest of D. Prishchepov were not isolated instances. Almost simultaneously a large group of culturally and economically prominent figures were arrested, among them the very popular philologist and academician Ia. Lesik, the renowned Belorussian geographer and economist, Academician Smolich, the Secretary of the Belorussian Academy of Sciences, Academician V. Lastovskii, Picheta, who was rector of the University, and others.

665 625 There were changes in the attitude and approach of the G. P. U. This organization received a standing order which was not to be changed for the arrest of Party members. As late as 1930, the G. P. U. had quite openly not meddled in the internal affairs of the Communist Party as the Party itself held court over its unsubmissive members and administered punishment. It had its own controlling and punitive organs in the Central Control Commission which had its plenipotentiaries throughout the republics and oblasts. . . . /22/

Anton Balitskii and the "Odessa" Group (1)

1. For information on the "Odessites" see the article by A. Sakovich, "Belorussi v Odesse" /"Belorussians in Odessa" Beda, /Misery/ No. 5 (10), May, 1952.

661 The People's Commissar of Public Education of the B. S. S. R., Anton Balitskii, was also a victim of the G. P. U. Until 1928 he was a deputy in the Narkomat, but even then he actually directed all its activities. Professor V. Ignatovskii had many other responsibilities besides the Narkomat of Public Education. He devoted a lot of attention to the Institute of Belorussian Culture and gave lectures at the University and in the Agricultural Institute; literary and scientific work also took up a lot of his time. He had written several studies of

563 626 536 661 665 the Bund Party, and from this the conclusion was drawn that the Jewish chauvinists were idealizing a chauvinistic party and its members. This was enough to have the play immediately removed from the stage. It was also necessary to destroy the inscriptions on the monument (1). The Bolsheviks cannot bear the popularity of any

1. The monument to Girsh Lekert was placed on the site of the one to Alexander II in Minsk in 1922 (cf. Malaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopedia) /Little Soviet Encyclopedia/ Vol.IV, 1929 Edition, page 554, and also 1937 Edition, Vol. VI, page 139) and "liquidated" during the Ezhovshchina. Such was also the fate of one of the Minsk streets which in 1922 had been renamed Lekert Street and during the Ezhovshchina was re-renamed Voyoshilov Street.

other Party or its members, even though such popularity actually might be in accordance with historical reality. In this connection still another example is characteristic. The State Publishing House issued a series of biographies in the series called Zhizn' Zamechatel'nykh Liudei. /Lives of Outstanding People/. One of the books was about the life and activity of the famous volunteer Zheliabov. The book had been in circulation for quite a long time when criticism of it appeared in the Soviet press, as a result of which the book was withdrawn. The reason given was that the person of Zheliabov as a national worker was idealized -- this in spite of the fact that Lenin, even though not agreeing with the Narodnovolets tactics, called the movement a "heroic epoch". The real reason lies in the fact that Zheliabov admitted individual terror and advocated personal selflessness which are both very appealing to youth. /33/ The Bolshevik program repudiates individual terror, even though surreptitiously they practice it very widely. They are afraid to infect Soviet youth with the Narodnovolets' ideas about selflessness and thus turn it against themselves.

186 661 The Belorussians were always very proud of their great ancestor -- the scholar from Polotsk, a Doctor of Philosophy, and the first man in Belrussia to have a book published -- F. Skarina. In 1512, this great man received the degree of Doctor in medicine at the University of Padua. In one of the museum halls of the University there is even now a full-length portrait of Doctor Skarina among the other University celebrites. Until 1930 a lot of work and research

661 Sciences building, he ordered a small house to be built for him not far from the Academy /40/ and slightly set apart from the bustle of the city. The style of its architecture was western, but, what is worse, beside it there was built a pigeoncote. In a free society these "inclinations" would not have aroused the slightest suspicion. It appears that Dombalj was arrested during the Ezhovshchina and paid in full for everything. It is particularly mystifying to note that the trial was held in Warsaw. Another worker who was with Dombalj in the affair maintained that he conducted himself throughout in a most revolutionary manner, organizing a hunger-strike while together with him in the same cell of the Warsaw jail. His learned study of Belorussian rivers was declared predestined for use by spies in the service of Poland, and the pigeoncote pronounced a post for carrier pigeons.

In connection with the destruction of the national movement changes were also instituted in the Soviet consulate in Warsaw. A. Ul'ianov, the son of a Minsk doctor, had been head of the Belorussian section of the consulate. His assistants were the Belorussians, Il'iuchenok and Brovkovich, who had been People's Commissar of Finances before being sent to the Warsaw consulate. At that time Ul'ianov had as yet not been subjected to any disciplinary measures, and later was appointed to the consulate in Latvia. Brovkovich was recalled from Warsaw, was director of the Belorussian State Publishing House for a very short time, was fired from this job, appointed director of a fishing concern sixty kilometers from Minsk, and then arrested. After his recall from Warsaw the consular employee Il'iuchenok was offered very second-rate work in the State Publishing House and was deported to the North in 1931. All traces of him have disappeared. In Minsk at the time there was a group of three persons which comprised the staff of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs of the U. S. S. R. in the B. S. S. R. The plenipotentiary's deputy, a young Communist and a graduate of the University of Belorussia, was also suspected of being a National-Democrat and arrested.

New Personalities in the Party /41/

665 In connection with the beginning of the destruction of the national movement there were even some changes in the

665 apparatus of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belorussia. The chief of the culture and propaganda division, Dr. Senkevich, was recalled from his work to Moscow. A teacher by profession, he became implicated in revolutionary activities in 1950. When reprisals began he was forced to flee to the United States where he remained until the 1917 revolution. By the way, because of complicity in the same affair with Senkevich the prominent Belorussian Soviet writer, Iakub Kolos, was sentenced at the same time to three years confinement which he served in the jail in Minsk. In the United States Senkevich managed to graduate from a university and become a doctor of medicine. After the 1917 revolution he returned to Russia via Japan and there evidently joined the Communist Party. Then, since he was a Belorussian, he was sent to work there and appointed the chief of one of the Central Committee's subdivisions. Rather shy by nature and no longer young he shared the views of the nationalists concerning the cultural rebirth of the Belorussian nation, and while occupying the position of chief of one of the subdivisions of the Central Committee, Senkevich took steps to ensure that all the cultural measures were put into effect. Actually, all problems connected with the cultural degeneration of Belorussia passed across his desk to the Central Committee, and all decrees were formulated there as well. During the purge of the National-Democrats Dr. Senkevich was removed from his job and recalled to Moscow. What happened to him later is not known although evidently he died. A young Communist, Chernushevich, was appointed in his place; he had ascended the ladder of the Communist hierarchy rather rapidly, as late as 1925 he was no more than the chief of militia in some isolated district.

In those days the second secretary of the Party played a prominent role in the Central Committee of the Belorussian Communist Party. In about 1928, the Belorussian, Vasilevich, occupied that position. Before becoming Second Secretary he had been People's Commissar of Finances in Belorussia. According to the established order the second secretary was the actual director of all organizational work, his primary task was to supervise the distribution of Party cadres throughout the Republic. In Belorussia the first secretary was always an envoy of the Kremlin; his duties consisted of making sure that directives from Moscow were fulfilled. In those times the appointment and transfer of Party cadres went according

65 to the following order. If a People's Commissar needed a responsible worker for work either in the Commissariat or in some district, he generally addressed himself to the second secretary of the Party Central Committee with the indicated nomination. Any problem arising in connection with the man's recall could be ironed out with the director of the institution where he was working, and usually with this the affair was terminated. In /42/ such cases the worker's appointment was effected by sending him a so-called "pass". If he was at a more responsible post his transfer or appointment had to be entered into the record of the Central Committee decrees. In all cases confirmation by the second secretary of the Party or an instruction from him was sufficient. If the People's Commissariat had to transfer its own man from one district to another or recall him to work in the Commissariat, the secretary of the district Party committee had to assent to it. In case the district refused to release the man, the second secretary again had the last word in the matter. Thus the second secretary disposed of the Party cadres, and this fact was highly significant with regard to the national work. Vasilevich was very closely allied with the leaders of the national movement in Belorussia and shared their views. All appointments passed through his hands as well as dismissals and in some cases the recall of Party workers, and this permitted him to operate with proven workers and to distribute them wherever necessary. The agenda of the Central Committe Bureau's sessions was always approved by him; he also outlined speeches beforehand and appointed the speakers. The activities of Secretary Vasilevich were much in evidence and could hardly escape the attention of the Kremlin, especially after the 1930 arrests. In the second half of 1930, he was recalled from Belorussia and sent to work as director of the land department in one of the Siberian oblast's. As a result, during the Ezhovshchina, Vasilevich was held accountable for everything that had happened in Belorussia and shared the fate of thousands of those arrested at the time. Less consequential functionaries of the Party Central Committee were also transferred to other jobs.

V. Sharangovich was sent out by Moscow in place of Vasilevich as Second Secretary. He was Belorussian by nationality and in the first years of Soviet power had worked in Belorussia as prosecutor for the People's Commissariat of Justice. It appears that he was a partisan during the Soviet-Polish War, was taken prisoner by the Poles, and exchanged for someone after the conclusion of peace. From his very first days as second secretary, Sharangovich quickly fell in line with the leading Belorussian Party workers. He was

665 unaffected and accessible. He took under his direct protection and guidance the young Communists who were just out of the Komsomol and resolutely promoted them to rather responsible positions, taking notice of their successes and helping them in their work. Most Belorussian Party workers considered Sharangovich as one of their own and trusted him.

The Estonian, Gei, was at that time the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Party in Belorussia. He had been sent /43/ out by the Kremlin around the end of 1929. Before his appointment nothing either good or bad was known of him, and it is possible that he was a lower level functionary somewhere in the R. S. F. S. R. In any case, his appointment to Belorussia was looked upon as a promotion since the region was regarded as a rather responsible field of Party activity. Its position on the border, the complicated state of its national affairs, and the policy which was being followed at the time within Belorussia, demanded that the Party secretary be adaptable, tactful, and careful in his work. Gei was not noted for his masterful organizational ability, and in his work as director of a republican Party he was not outstanding. He did not vaunt himself, nor induce others to do so. By nature he had no friends nor in fact any close relationships. Nothing was altered in the organization of work by Sharangovich's arrival. At that time everything was subordinated to accomplishing one task -- the speediest realization of the collectivization in Belorussia. Hundreds of workers were sent out in brigades throughout the regions and districts to give on the spot assistance. Telegrams with the sternest possible directives were dispatched from the center, setting all kinds of requirements and demanding reports. All efforts were aimed at declaring "total collectivization" in Belorussia -- about which a telegram could then be sent to the Kremlin. The kolkhozes were given various high-sounding titles. Here and there the first secretary of the Party was remembered and a kolkhoz named after him. The name Gei was also given to a rather large peat factory not far from Minsk.

During the Ezhovshchina Gei's name was removed from the kolkhozes and also from the peat factory. By this sign the Belorussians were able to guess that Gei had turned up in the camp of the "enemies of the motherland."

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665 There was a plan afoot, at first discussed very timidly and diffidently in a narrow circle of Belorussian workers, of maneuvering

557 665 to the point where the first secretary of the Party Central Committee would be a Belorussian. The idea began to catch on more and more obstinately after the arrival of Sharangovich in Minsk. It is conceivable that this aim was furthered by the opposition which developed for the succession to Lenin, and possibly the Belorussians chose this moment as the most appropriate. In any case, there was a tendency to support for the post of first secretary either V. Sharangovich or the president of the Sovnarkom /Council of People's Commissariats/ of the B. S. S. R., N. Goloded. Further blows were being dealt to Gei's already rather weak influence upon the course of events as well as his authority among the leaders. Sharangovich cooperated with him only formally, having gathered under his banner a group of Party secretaries from the local districts. Most of the People's Commissars supported the Sovnarkom President, N. Goloded, whose authority was unquestionable. Although not very highly educated, Goloded possessed great natural abilities and was a skillful leader. /44/ His protectors in Moscow were Molotov, Voroshilov, and Ordzhonikidze. Another prominent figure in Belorussia was the irreplaceable president of the Central Executive Committee of the B. S. S. R., Al. Cherviakov. Gei was almost isolated, and in several cases Goloded simply ignored him. Gei's position was also insecure because he had spent the first years of his work in Belorussia at the time when the national policy was still being promulgated -- when Prishchepov was People's Commissar of Agriculture and had aimed at strengthening the private peasants. It goes without saying that the first signature on all the decisions and decrees of that period concerning cultural reconstruction and the land problem was that of Gei. The Kremlin demanded a more decisive struggle with the Natsdemovshchina and the Prishchepovschina. However, the laurels of "watchfulness" for uncovering "counter-revolution" in the national question belonged to the G. P. U.; it was only after the event that Gei, through the use of academic brigades, was able to provide a foundation for proving the national theories harmful and for justifying the correctness of the 1930 arrests. Gei was recalled from Belorussia in 1931, and some Belorussian leaders saw in this the promise of the speedy realization of their desires to see a Belorussian as first secretary.

After a short while the Kremlin sent the Ingush, N. Gikalo, in place of Gei to Belorussia as first secretary. The hopes of the

537 Belorussian leaders had not been justified. By sending Secretary
665 Gikalo, the Kremlin made it very clear to the Belorussian Party
● leadership that it had no intention of indulging their desires and hopes of altering the established method of appointing the first secretary of the Party in Belorussia. Gikalo's further activities confirmed this in full. Evidently the Kremlin endowed him with wide and extraordinary powers and instructed him to put the Belorussian Party organization in order, forcing it to be subordinate to the one-man leadership of the first secretary. The Belorussians lost very much by this exchange of Gei for Gikalo. The Party summit had clearly miscalculated. Gikalo's subsequent work reduced their role to naught. He employed various methods for subjugating them. According to the etiquette previously in effect, it was considered inappropriate for even the first secretary of the Party to bring along his own collaborators. Gikalo disregarded this convention, and came to Minsk with a private secretary whom he introduced as his aide. Up until then such a position as aide had not even existed in Soviet or Party nomenclature. This one assumed an attitude of complete independence with regard to all Communists, including the leaders, and was very emphatic in insisting that all his orders be fulfilled as though they came from Gikalo himself. Gikalo not only did not oppose this state of affairs but even ordered compliance. /45/ He did not become intimate with anyone, and behaved quite independently. He devoted a lot of attention to the second secretary, Sharangovich. Gikalo knew that he enjoyed a certain amount of popularity and authority among Belorussians, and therefore he endeavored to bring him over to his own side and subordinate him to his influence. He accomplished it rather quickly. He began by issuing instructions that Sharangovich was to be credited with certain services which had previously never even been heard of. By means of propaganda Sharangovich was made the leader of the partisan movement in Belorussia during the Soviet-Polish War. Gikalo arranged to have certain obliging Communists found to organize the collection of signatures on petitions requesting that Sharangovich be decorated for his past services. As a result of this campaign, assisted by intercessions from "up above" in the Central Committee of the Belorussian Communist Party, Sharangovich, twelve years after his "partisan exploits", was decorated by the Soviet government with the Order of the Red Banner, at that time the highest military decoration. Real partisans were secretly offended by this injustice

537 and felt that it was not much use performing services and deeds of
665 valor since what was really needed was sponsorship and protection. By this skillful maneuver Gikalo broke up the consolidation of the Belorussian Communist summit, and Sharangovich fell wholly under his influence.

The Communists who were grouped around Goloded, the President of the Sovnarkom, likewise decided to crown their protector with a decoration. In the first years of Soviet power, Goloded had been president of the executive committee in the country town of Gori-Gorkiy. In those times partisans still operated in the Belorussian forests, and the Soviets were waging a savage war against them. Because of his public capacity Goloded also took some part in repressing the anti-Soviet partisans. Infected with the example of Sharangovich's decoration Goloded's supporters also began to collect signatures on petitions. Only a small rumor was collected because the sphere of his activity had been limited to one uezd, the "deeds" of Goloded had not had many witnesses, and careful people took a look around anyway, to see how Secretary Gikalo would react to this campaign. The question of decorating Goloded was brought up before the Bureau of the Party Central Committee, but there it was shelved and never put in motion. This was a bitter affront to Goloded, and bad feeling developed between him and Gikalo. However he nursed his malice and did not enter into an open conflict with Gikalo, considering that such a struggle would be dangerous to himself. /46/

From the very first days of his work Gikalo had tried to place his men in the most important sectors of the work. He sent to Moscow for one of his good friends, a certain Posse who graduated from the Institute of Red Professorship /Institut krasnoi professury/. Posse occupied several positions in cultural institutions. He was a lecturer in the Communist university, in the journalistic institute, and also worked in the Institute of Party History. Posse was quite a talented writer and frequently placed his articles in Party organs. He was very active in the uprooting of National-Democracy, and Gikalo used him to exert influence on the cultural front. New faces likewise appeared on the Central Committee staff, placed there by Gikalo. At first they always occupied very inconsequential positions, a certain Lentsner was very characteristic in this respect. Previously he had been Trotsky's private secretary, as people who

547/665 were interested in the matter explained it. Lentsner understood full well that having been an intimate of Trotsky would make it very difficult for him to carry on any widespread activities without considerable tenacity on his own part as well as extensive support and backing. Gikalo also took this into account. In addition, Lentsner's energetic nature strove after power, where Gikalo also supported him since he liked Lentsner's assertiveness and evidently had known him before. In order to provide Lentsner with lower-level Party work for a term where he might demonstrate his practical abilities, Gikalo appointed him secretary of the Sennenskii Rayon Party Committee. This rayon occupies a rather prominent place in Belorussia as it is very large and devoted primarily to flax growing. In fulfilling the plans for sowing, harvesting, and, most important of all, for government deliveries, the work of the rayon Party secretary is appreciated very highly. Lentsner appraised the situation correctly. By applying force and using highly repressive measures against the kolkhozes he managed to see that the kolkhozes of the Sennenskii rayon not only fulfilled the plan for linen deliveries of flax but even over-fulfilled it. The rayon participated in numerous other Soviet economic campaigns. After these "victories" Lentsner, in order to publicize his efforts, wrote a pamphlet with the title Iz otstaiushchikh v peredovye /From Lagards to Leaders/. Ostensibly the pamphlet praised the Party leadership, personified by Gikalo, through whose efforts the Sennenskii rayon took the lead in forced deliveries of flax. By means of percentages and figures the results of the efforts of former years were contrasted with the previous year when Lentsner had become Party Secretary. There were a lot of distortions and false comparisons in the pamphlet. In this way Lentsner presented Gikalo with a chance to emphasize his successful choice of Lentsner as rayon secretary, which had been fully justified by experience, and, what is more important, to propose after several months of local level work that the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party appoint Lentsner editor of the Party newspaper Zvezda /The Star/ /47/. Lentsner was recalled from the rayon and confirmed as editor; thus this important and influential position, one which Gikalo was particularly anxious to have occupied by his own man, was filled by a person who owed allegiance to him and was responsive to his instructions. In his new book Lentsner began to copy the methods of the infallible Moskovskaia Pravda /Moscow Pravda/ in full.

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665 The moment was very appropriate. Stalin had settled accounts with the opposition and become the completely powerful leader. The theory and practice of leadership was picked up and quickly began to spread into the provinces. Even in the innermost rayons, the rural kolkhoz Party members shouted at meetings, "All hail to our leader so-and-so!" Any secretary of the local Party Committee could be considered such a leader. The "leader" accepted all this enthusiasm as his due. The leadership treatment and fawning before Gikalo were of course especially outrageous. Lentsner, as editor of Zvezda /The Star/, lauded Gikalo and spared no words or phrases. His portraits were published in large editions, and clubs, reading rooms, Party and Soviet institutions, schools, and empty shop windows were decorated with them in large quantities. Access to him became a great deal more difficult, and just to see him a special pass was necessary. He did not always receive even responsible Party functionaries. The following incident will attest just how cozy a nest had been feathered by means of 'kadership' and apple polishing. During a banquet, after a session of the Party plenum everyone was shouting, "All hail to our leader, Comrade Gikalo." However there was one member of the banquet who started to quarrel, evidently after considerable intake of alcohol, about the propriety of calling Gikalo a "leader". This incident was immediately brought to the attention of Secretary Sharangovich. The audacious individual was expelled from from the Party, but the affair stretched on for more than a year and finally came to the ears of Moscow. The guilty person was excused by the fact that of course there is only one leader -- Stalin, and although Gikalo is an excellent Party director still he is not a leader. The guilty man was reinstated in the Party, with a reprimand, however, for "quarreling without cause". At the time there were five Party secretaries in various fields of activity, all perpetually guarded by G. P. U. agents.

Purges 1933 and 1934

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664 In 1933 there was a purge in the Party. Gikalo used it to get rid of certain elements which were troublesome to him and thus to strengthen his own position still further. To attain these ends he selected a commission with particular care. It was important to choose a president /48/ for the purge. In order to settle matters, once and for all with the national movement in Narkompros, the Academy of Sciences, the University, the State Publishing House,

665 the National Commissariat of Health /Narkomzdrava/, his wife,
661 Gikalo-Chizhova was appointed President of the purge in these institutions. She was reported to be a partisan from the Caucasus. When she first arrived in Belorussia she had occupied the post of director of the journalistic institute.

The purge was public; those involved had to recite their biographies and confess their sins. Entry was free to all, and not only was every accusatory speech permitted but even encouraged. There were cases of Communists, especially those who considered themselves old fighters with long records and who did not want to undergo these unpleasantnesses, turning in their Party cards themselves. At the opposite extreme, some farsighted people arranged to have their friends come to the meeting on the day of their particular purge and by their speeches attempt to portray them in the best possible light. Particular pressure was applied upon those who had been implicated in the national movement, Trotskyites, and those who had belonged to other parties. They were mercilessly expelled. Some time before the purge, various Party archives had been examined and G. P. U. reports which could serve as a basis for expulsion from the Party selected. In order to compromise directors of institutions who because of their good standing in the Party could not be summarily expelled, another method was employed. In such cases Gikalo usually issued a directive to expel without mercy all Communist fellow-workers of the one whom it was proposed to compromise. Having discredited the environment it was then easy to throw in the accusation that the director had been exposed to unhealthy influences. This is what was done to Sovnarkom President Goloded, the president of the Central Executive Committee, A. Cherniakov, and the People's Commissar of Public Health, Tsentsiper.

Arrests of Belorussian Nationalists - 1933

In 1933, there were some arrests of Belorussian intellectuals;
661 they were not exactly of a mass nature but were still significant. The victims in most cases were young Belorussians poets and writers, who were evidently regarded as a relapse from the mass arrests of 1930. This literary youth had given great promise and was burning with the desire to serve its nation. The second group of arrests was from among prominent Belorussian public figures, mainly those

665 A new Party purge took place after the killing of Kirov; it
661 went under the innocent designation of a "certification of Party documents." This purge was not public and had as its slogan -- "Let's put Party affairs in order." Externally it looked as though the Party records and documents were being checked and collated. Accuracy was required in all files. However, in actuality, this was the most terrible purge of all. All Communists who had ever been penalized, those excluded from the Party in the past, ones suspected of nationalistic inclinations, Trotskyism, and those who had come from other parties, all those were under suspicion and had their Party cards taken away. Lists were drawn up of the ones selected, and their expulsion from the Party was legalized by a Central Committee decree. This work was handled by the so-called Commissioner of Party Control, who had taken the place of the Central Control Commission. In some institutions as many as fifty percent were ousted; everything was done behind the scenes, and it was rare that anyone appealed. However, in some isolated cases Gikalo called in the expellees for examination. In Minsk Professor Kaminskii, a man of seventy-five and a specialist on eye diseases, was expelled after an examination of his Party record /51/ on the grounds that before joining the Party he had been in the Bund and in the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. To Gikalo's question as to why he had changed from one party to another he cleverly remarked that all his life he had been seeking the best party and at last had found it . . .

Eventually, of course, some of those expelled were reinstated by Moscow, but this took years. In Pravda there appeared articles about excessive zeal, a too formalistic attitude and too little sensitivity, which stated that some honorable people had been expelled.

557 After the check-up of Party documents several commissars
665 were recalled from Belorussia, even though they had not been expelled from the Party and had not suffered any Party penalities. The reasons were deep and secret. Those recalled from Belorussia were Belorussian by nationality. In the past they had not been mixed up in active national work, having on the contrary replaced the commissars who were fired and arrested in 1930. However, during their work they had not practiced indiscriminate defamation of everything national in Belorussia and in many cases quietly encouraged various manifestations of the national work. They had been embittered by the dictatorial tactics of Secretary Gikalo, and there were other motives as well. These commissars had joined forces around Sovnarkom president Goloded, Gikalo's strong and stubborn opponent. They never ceased to regard him as a possible candidate for the post of first party

557 secretary in Belorussia once Sharangovich, after getting his de-
665 coration, went over to Gikalo's side. Goloded was a good business man and not a worker in the national movement. While president of the Sovnarkom, in 1928, he carefully studied the economy of the region, aimed to develop industry in the Republic, and supported Belorussian cultural institutions and theaters. Gikalo discerned in Goloded a powerful and influential competitor. However, by his clever tactics during the Party purges Gikalo managed to cut him off from most of his support. Platun was recalled from Narkompros and sent out to Siberia as the boss of the political section of Sovkhoz. D. Chernushevich, the former director of the Cultural and Propaganda Section of the Central Committee, was appointed in his place. People's Commissar of Agriculture Rechitskii was recalled and sent to the Privolzhskaia oblast' to manage transportation. In his place, Goloded's deputy, the Pole Genek, was appointed. The President of the Higher Council of the National Ecomomy /Vysshii Soviet Narodnogo Khoziaistva/ (as the system of industrial administration was called before the organization of special commissariats) Grisevich was appointed director of the political section of some railroad in Siberia. People's Commissar of Health Tsentsiper, a friend of Goloded, was also recalled. A certain Surta was sent out from Moscow to replace him. /52/ All these had been old Belorussian figures. On the eve of the Ezhovshchina they were temporarily faced with honorable exile.

Party Personnel Shifts 1934-1936

In about 1934 the second secretary of the Communist Party Central Committee, Sharangovich, was recalled. His transfer out of Belorussia was evidently the work of first secretary Gikalo. Sharangovich, as has already been indicated, enjoyed some authority among Belorussian workers in the first period of his work. He was considered one of them, and he was also closer to them and more accessible than the Ingush, Gikalo, all the more so since he did not display that particular dislike for the Belorussian movement which Gikalo manifested in his work. (1) Upon Sharangovich's

1. It should be noted even so that in spite of all his "particular dislike for the Belorussian national movement"

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Gikalo shielded Belorussian literature and art, in fact patronized it, similar to one of his followers - Ponomarenko about whom more later.

arrival for work in Belorussia Gikalo, aiming to divide the unity of the Belorussian Communist leaders, tried to attract him to his side, and in this he succeeded almost completely. But in the course of time Sharangovich became superfluous, for Gikalo and for Belorussia. His recall coincided with the reorganization of the Central Party Commission and the Commissariat of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, the so-called Ts. K. K. -R. K. I., which were separated into two independent institutions. Sharangovich was appointed commissioner of party control in Kazakhstan. As secretary of the Belorussian Communist Party his scope of activity had been broader and more varied since every day he had to mix with a number of leading workers and was approached for directives on all problems of Party and Soviet construction. The commissioner of party control worked in a limited field, his job consisting mainly of analyzing all possible infractions of Party ethics and expulsions from the Party, examination of appeals from expulsion, and the imposition of Party penalties. Generally old Party members were appointed to this post, ones who were no longer capable of broad practical activity in other phases of work. On one hand Sharangovich's amour propre was flattered at being appointed as an organ of Party control, at being entrusted by the Kremlin with control functions over the Party in Kazakhstan, but simultaneously he was removed from the political scene, and this did not suit his restless nature.

On Sharangovich's recommendation, the Belorussian, Volkovich, was appointed second secretary of the Central Committee of the Party. Until his appointment Volkovich had been the president of the Bobruysk executive committee and was not widely known. At his new and prominent post he made no impression at all, being sick frequently while Sharangovich was secretary. Belorussian workers had generally come to him to have questions decided, but after his departure not many came to Volkovich, knowing his weak orientation in questions of Soviet and Party construction. All efforts were made to gain admittance to Gikalo himself as he was now the only real Party functionary left in Belorussia. To tell the truth there were still three secretaries left in the Party Central Committee, but they played no conspicuous role since they were occupied with specialized phases of

537 665 activity. Such a one, for example, was the Special Secretary for Transport, Ivanov. He did not concern himself with general Party direction. Thus Gikalo's only opposition was the president of the Sovnarkom, Goloded. Their mutual relations were deteriorating rapidly.

The tense situation in the country at that time became abruptly worse. In Moscow, efforts to annihilate and liquidate the members of the opposition were being intensified. There was a significant shake up of Party leaders in command of military districts throughout the Soviet Union. Heightened "awareness" was being demanded of everyone. Any sort of exposure was encouraged. . . The following incident was typical of Belorussian conditions. Trotsky's former secretary -- a certain Lentsner -- mentioned on page 46, was editor of the Party newspaper, Zvezda. He was a very adroit fellow, and Secretary Gikalo was particularly sympathetic toward him. When the unmasking campaign had reached a rather intense pitch, Gikalo made haste to spirit his favorite out of Belorussia into the Dnepropetrovsk Oblast', doing this without any publicity or the usual Party formalities. Having made arrangements with the secretary of Dnepropetrovsk oblast', a man named Kataevich who was widely known throughout the Soviet Union, Gikalo dispatched Lentsner to him without a decree from the Bureau of the Party Central Committee. There he was given the post of director of the Oblast' Agricultural department. Goloded, being a member of the Party Central Committee, took advantage of this. At a session of the Bureau he demanded to have explained upon what foundation a worker of top Party standing, the editor of the Party newspaper, and appointed to this post by a plenum of the Party Central Committee, /54/ was sent out of Belorussia without the Bureau's sanction. Gikalo was placed in an extremely sensitive position, the more so since Lentsner had such a heavy black mark against him, as friendship with Trotsky was considered to be. In the minutes of the Central Committee Bureau's session Goloded entered his own particular opinion concerning Secretary Gikalo's incorrect activities as manifested in his granting leave to Lentsner and the event became known in the Kremlin since all minutes were sent to the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party in Moscow.

It seems that Secretary Gikalo was recalled from Belorussia in the first part of 1936. He received a post in the Kharkov Oblast' as second secretary of the Party. It was evident to all that he had

537 been demoted . . . Sovnarkom President Goloded had become
565 temporarily unassailable, and in Moscow he was above any sort of suspicion. As for Gikalo, to be changed from party director of a republic to second secretary of an oblast', even one with heavy industry, was considered a step down.

After an absence of more than a year in Kazakhstan, V. Sharangovich was sent by the Kremlin as first secretary of the Central Committee of the Party in Belorussia. It looked as if the Belorussian Communists had attained their heart's desire -- as first secretary they got a Belorussian who for the third time was returning to work in Belorussia. The ensuing year brought with it many griveous changes.

Yezhovshchina - 1937

643 /this spelling occurs in the original, otherwise the transliteration used is "Ezhovshchina." Translator/

661 In the middle of 1937, the president of the Supreme Soviets of the B. S. S. R. and the U. S. S. R., Aleksandr Grigor'evich Cherviakov, committed suicide. A Belorussian by nationality and born in the village of Dukorka thirty-five kilometers from Minsk, he was a teacher by specialty, having graduated from the normal school in Wilno. In the First World War Cherviakov was an officer. The February Revolution found him in Petrograd where he subsequently organized the Belorussian soldiers of the Petrograd garrison. After the Bolshevik seizure of power Cherviakov entered the Communist Party. When on February 27, 1919 the so-called Lithuanian-Belorussian Soviet Republic was organized on the territory of Lithuania and Belorussia, Cherviakov became Deputy Commissar of Public Education (1). From the day of /55/ the second announce-

1. Immediately before this Cherviakov was Commissar of Public Education in the first government of the B. S. S. R (cf. Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsikopedia /Large Soviet Encyclopedia/, 1934 Edition, Vol. LXI, page 195/ (sic).

ment of the Belorussian S. S. R. up to his death Cherviakov was the irreplaceable president of the Central Executive Committee and then of the Supreme Soviet of the B. S. S. R. . He was not noted for his revolutionary activities. It is possible that in the

665 Even Party Secretary Sharangovich's turn came up at last. After a short time as first secretary of the Party he was arrested. 661 His fate is known from the Moscow newspapers. Sharangovich was tried along with the group headed by Bukharin. The trial was public, and portions of it were printed in the papers. It seems that all the defendents were sentenced to death, including Sharangovich. The impression he made was that of a sincere and hearty man. As was previously noted he had gained /58/ the confidence of many Belorussian Communists, especially young ones. However, in the light of subsequent events his activities in Belorussia give indications of secretiveness and lack of sincerity toward those who trusted him. No Belorussian got decorated for partisan activities during the Soviet-Polish War, yet Sharangovich was decorated ten years later. And in any case nothing had been heard of his guerilla activity at the time. It is common knowledge that there was no unified command over the partisans in 1919 and 1920, and if Sharangovich was made the leader of the partisan movement, the actual participants themselves only learned about it afterwards. His change in allegiance after he received the decoration and became Gikalo's obedient tool left a bad taste in the mouths of many Communists. His term as first secretary was marked by the deaths of president of the Supreme Soviet of the B. S. S. R. A. Cherviakov, and of president of the Sovnarkom of the B. S. S. R. N. Goloded. Even if Sharangovich was not primarily responsible for their deaths, nonetheless he was very close to the whole affair. In the last stage of his life, at the trial of the Bukharin group, after Bukharin had testified, Sharangovich made some remark as this: "Bukharin, why tell lies here in court?" Even in a Soviet court Sharangovich tried to gain some advantage for himself.

665 Instead of the defunct Sharangovich the Kremlin sent one Volkov as Belorussian first secretary. All of his "activity" took place at the height of the Ezhovshchina. Volkov did not concern himself with leadership but was mainly an adjunct of the N. K. V. D., and "honorary" office which he filled with particular pleasure and satisfaction. A lot has been said and written about the N. K. V. D. 's activities during that period.

665 By nature Volkov, the new secretary of the Party Central 661 Committee, was a crude despot with the manners such as chekists had during the first years of the Soviet system. Uncultured and

665 unbridled in his expressions, he produced a repellent impression.
661 He spent his time making speeches at various meetings during which he fumed against "the enemies of the people." Right and left he ascribed various kinds of crimes, particularly espionage and wrecking, to various victims. After such a characterization the agents of the N. K. V. D. had nothing left to do except collect the victims and cart them off to the cellars. It is appropriate to hear the story of a certain Prokopchuk who was a professor of dermatology. At a meeting of workers in medicine Volkov made a speech accusing the professor of having spread veneral diseases among his patients for the purpose of sabotage. By the way, from the Soviet point of view, Professor Prokopchuk's political reliability was suspect least of all. /59/ In the past he had been a partisan in the Soviet-Polish War; after graduating from a medical institute he applied to become a specialist, and as a reliable man and a Communist he was ordered to Paris to perfect himself in his specialty. After this accusation Volkov did not allow Prokopchuk the chance to speak in his own defense.

Volkov sent his henchmen into the country districts, and they operated in exactly the same fashion. These envoys of Volkov, so-called Central Committee instructors, upon arrival in some particular rayon, would convoke a Party meeting and right there, having accused the contemplated victim of espionage and sabotage, would take away his Party card. The N. K. V. D. would then finish the job. One particular instance of this sort became widely known. About six kilometers from Minsk there is a rayon center, the town Cherven' (formerly Igumen). A certain Plentnev was Party secretary in this rayon -- an average director and not outstanding at all. Formerly he had been the village schoolmaster. At a Party meeting, Volkovs' deputy took his Party card away and accused him of espionage. Able to foresee the course events would take, Pletnev, who was sick and very nervous and did not want to have to wait for these unpleasant developments, decided to commit suicide. He shot himself in the temble, but did not succeed to kill himself. The severely wounded Pletnev was arrested by the N. K. V. D. and put in the prisoners' ward of a hospital. He lived, but the shot had severed his ocular nerve, and he was left blind in both eyes. After a lengthy arrest he was set free. The Ezhovshchina passed; here and there, timidly and without any special publicity, new "enemies

65 of the people" were beginning to be uncovered--those who had been
66 arrested inhumanly and using such refined forms or derision in carrying on the investigations into non-existant crimes. The Central Committee instructor who had been directly responsible for Pletnev's blindness was remembered, and a public trial was organized in Minsk as a warning example. By the magnitude of the offense and the way events were developing, most people thought that the accused would be threatened with the death penalty. However he got off with five years imprisonment. One wonders if he survived his sentence in the concentration camps.

As a display some saboteurs were tried publicly in Gomel' during the Ezhovshchina. Those implicated were the president of the Gomel' City Soviet (his name escapes me), the director of the City Health Department -- a certain Gurlo, and the head of the repair shops for tractors and farm machinery whose name was Valiukevich. All three were Communists. They were accused of unbelievable crimes, and they admitted them not only in the N. K. V. D. cellars but also in court -- something which made a very deep impression upon the masses of workers present at the trial. By the way, before the revolution Gurlo had /60/ worked at the very insignificant job of town postman; he attached himself to the Bolsheviks in the very first days of their power, and later, after a number of years, became director in the large telegraph and post offices. Gurlo, like the other two who were accused was absolutely not inclined to become a wrecker. However, he "admitted" that through a group of agents he had infected small children with syphilis while they were still in the nursing homes. All three were condemned to be shot. Gurlo's agents, of course, perished at the same time before the eyes of the public, without a trial. Tall N. K. V. D. operatives took them in custody and carried them away in the "black raven." Then there were persistent and highly probable rumors to the effect that they had been promised life and liberty for "confessing."

There was another case. A forty-year-old woman named Novikov was arrested in Gomes'. She was a Party member, half-educated, whose work was organizing women on the kolkozes. She was confronted with a charge of spying for Germany, based on the fact that during the first World War she had earned her bread by washing the German soldiers' laundry. The charge was

665 absurd, and the victim would not confess to the investigator. So he
661 began to try to assure her that her "confession" was needed by the Party. In her simplicity Novikov stated quite reasonably that he, the investigator, was also a member of the Party and if the Party needed someone to admit to a charge of espionage, here he was presented with the opportunity. By a lucky chance Novikov succeeded in being released; a good friend of hers who was acquainted with an influential N.K.V.D. agent helped her. Novikov herself used to tell about this.

They arrested one member of the Komsomol. He was assigned the role of having spied for Italy. Knowing himself to be absolutely innocent, he stubbornly refused to confess. The investigator beat him terribly, put him in a cell, put him on the assembly line -- the fellow was unable to stand up under these methods and was ready to confess. The other prisoners in the cell took pity on the innocent youth, but of course they were unable to assist him. The Komsomel member, by the way, was a student in a school of design. There was one sharp-witted person in the cell, and he taught the Komsomol member how to "confess." At the regular examination he confessed that his contacts during his espionage activities had been the Italians Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and others. The investigator was overjoyed by the admission, having gotten what he wanted and complied with the wishes of his "superior." He fed the Komsomol member, gave him some makhorka, and sent him back to the cell. There he sat for about two more weeks, thanking his preceptor for the successful method of confession. /61/ He was called in again for examination. The elder investigator swore at him for turning the investigation into a farce, but the young man explained that his teachers had certainly been famous Italians. The ignoramus investigator had not had a notion who these world-renowned men were and believed that Raphael was an organizer of spy rings.

676 During the Ezhovshchina the Belorussian Communist press
661 played an especially repulsive role. The so-called newspaper correspondents scoured the various Soviet agencies and institutions for accusatory material. In this work assistance was given by the directors of the secret departments of commissariats and other important establishments. These departments were called "special sections," and in most cases were under the supervision of the secretaries of the Communist cells. When some sort of evidence, no matter

697 Windows were reduced in size by the three quarters and filled with
661 bricks, wooden shields being set in some, to make it impossible to see the jail yard or the side of the street or to see the outside world in general. In the yards of the prison special cages were constructed for the prisoners' walks, surrounded by a high board fence without a roof, into which they let prisoners. Special small cells were made, completely without windows, and the number of rooms of confinement of all kinds was increased. The prison shops were made over into cells for holding prisoners. The prisons were transformed into places for keeping people who were under investigation. Those convicted were sent to distant concentration camps. Rooms were kept strictly isolated one from another, but nonetheless news was not only quickly disseminated throughout the prison but even penetrated beyond the walls.

661 When the terror slackened a very insignificant part of the prisoners was set free. However, almost every one of them had been ruined in health: teeth had been knocked out, ribs broken, ear drums shattered, rectums injured from being forced to sit on the sharp point of a stool or chair leg. But the principal sickness was spiritual emptiness, and for many, bitter disillusionment, dejection, apathy. Those liberated who were not Party members returned to their former places of work, if they had not already been replaced by others. For this "forced" absence they were not reimbursed, even though Soviet labor law makes provisions for the individual's wages to be paid him by his employer if through no fault of his own he is unable to work. Many had been forced to sign an attestation that they would not divulge what they had seen and heard in the N. K. V. D., and this paralyzed any demand that their legal rights be protected which had
665 been mercilessly violated. Unenviable also was the lot of Party
661 members who were set at liberty.[1] They had to go through even more trouble to be reinstated in the Party. The very fact of arrest made the Party member an expellee. No doubt many of them would have been glad to remain outside the Party, but a person who had been expelled and made no effort at reinstatement was automatically put in an incomparably worse situation than that of any non-Party person. Leaders adopted a rather guarded attitude toward those who had been liberated from arrest. They were a source of fear and danger in the event of one of the possible twists of the Communist Party's unforeseeable and changeable policy.

[1] [After having been arrested during the 1936-1937 political purge - Analyst]

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Ezhovshchina -- Summary /66/

661 The Ezhovshchina did away with nearly all the senior mem-
665 bers of the Communist Party, and of all those with pre-October standing there remained, apparently, only a few isolated individuals. All those who had been partisans in the Soviet-Polish War were annihilated; before the Ezhovshchina they had been considered a bulwark of all Communist measures in the outlying districts, especially in the ones on the Polish-Soviet border, and not a single political campaign could be promulgated without their active participation. Nor did those Communists escape who in their time had been sent to do underground work in Western Belorussia; they were accused of being Polish spies. Those who had been taken prisoner by the Germans during the first World War were also included, as they had seen the outside, even though their memories of it were far from pleasant since most of them had lived through a famine there. All Party members without exception who had, to any degree and no matter how remotely, been contaminated with Trotskyism or some other kind of opposition, were arrested.

The remnants of the Belorussian intelligentsia were arrested.
661 This now included people who had not participated actively in anything but who, by their outward characteristics, could have been supposed capable of independent thought: teachers, agronomists, engineers, planners and others. Almost none of the Belorussian poets and writers escaped. All who had served terms of imprisonment after being arrested in 1930 were arrested a second time during the Ezhovshchina and underwent a more severe form of punishment. In addition to the fact that the same Belorussian national workers who in 1930 had been condemned for National-Democracy were this time accused of Fascism, they also received a sentence of more years in concentration camps or were shot. A part of those arrested and condemned in 1930 was brought to the N. K. V. D. in Minsk. By means of examinations and visual confrontations they were used as witnesses for the indictments of those more recently arrested, and they, through the testimonies of these same newly arrested prisoners they themselves either had their sentences increased or were executed. Some prominent Belorussian figures who escaped were the satiricist, Kondrat Krapiva, and the former president of the Union of Belorussian writers, the Communist M. Klinkovich who out of fear of arrest cut

661 his throat with a razor but was saved from dying. Possibly it was just this which saved him from arrest. Others who were not arrested were Z. Biadulia and the budding writers, Brovko and Glebko. /67/

After the Ezhovshchina

625 661 After the Ezhovshchina accounts were settled with those whose function it had been to execute the will of the organizers of the terror. However, this took place within the walls of the N. D. V. D. In Vitebsk a certain Grechkin who had been arrested and subsequently set free was summoned to the (N. K. V. D.) court to serve as a witness in a case involving the inadmissibility of torture during examination. The investigator had knocked out several of Grechkin's teeth and was found guilty, but Grechkin was compelled to sign a statement that he would not divulge any information about what had transpired. The document, I Accuse the Kremlin of the Genocide of My Nation, by Nikolai Abramchik, published in 1950 in Toronto, Canada, in English, will provide sufficient testimony to the deeds of the N. K. V. D. in Belorussia during the Ezhovshchina.

665 661 The secretary of the Communist Party Central Committee, Volkov, was recalled from Belorussia after the Ezhovshchina and sent off to work in Mordovskaia oblast'. What became of him subsequently is not known, but the Belorussians will not forget this black figure who himself played such a very vital part in the slaughter ot tens of thousands of people. His cruelty was exceptional. P. Ponomarenko, who formerly had been a political agent in the Red Army in the Far East, was appointed first secretary. A new direction could be sensed in the Party's work, and this was particularly noticeable where the national movement was concerned. Formerly, national characteristics had been taken into account in various elections, appointments, and recruitments, but after the arrival of Ponomarenko the national problem ceased to exist officially. The whole group of the former leaders had been destroyed.[1]

661 643 Natalevich -- a man little known to the Belorussian masses, lacking in authority and initiative, and obedient to the will of the secretary of the Central Committee -- settled down into the presidency of the Supreme Soviet of the B. S. S. R. To the post of Secretary of the Supreme Soviet -- who in fact was the deputy president -- a completely unknown worker from around Mogilev 661 was appointed. A young doctor named Kiselev, who was totally

1 [During the 1936-1937 political purge - Analyst]

000 decided to give Wilno to Lithuania, knowing that in this way it would become Soviet.

However, before deserting Wilno even temporarily, the military high command of the Red Army picked a special purchasing commission which bought up manufactured articles with captured Polish money. They also bought hides and leather goods, various types of machinery, etc. All the purchases were taken out of Wilno and exported into the center of the Soviet Union. The bigger merchants concealed most of their wares, but their stores were discovered with the aid of their servants (shop assistants). After the termination of the officially-appointed period for the transfer of Wilno to Lithuania the city remained in the hands of the N.K.V.D. for two more days. The latter liquidated all the "unneeded" elements in the city and the prisons.

557 ● 605 177 The Communist guidance of the life of the Belorussian people during P. Ponomarenko's term in office, can be characterized as a period of comparative quiet. No one particularly admired his methods or his personality, but there were no disturbing occurrences similar to those which marked the secretaryships of Gikalo and Volkov. The unification of western Belorussia distracted people's attention to a great extent from the various unnecessary experiments and tensions on the old territory of Soviet Belorussia. Everyone who had the chance, particularly the working intelligentsia, writers, poets, theatrical employees, singers, and musicians, used all their pull to get assigned to the newly-attached territory. Most of them wanted to get acquainted with the new capitalist world and see there the horrible suffering and generally pitiable existence of the peasantry and workers. Instead of it they saw, if not an absolutely high standard of living, at least /71/ the possibility of acquiring both food products and other articles for everyday use. These circumstances dispersed the legend of the oppressiveness of capitalism. In accordance with his means everyone tried to get clothes and shoes for himself, and in particular to buy something for his wife and children. Every conceivable employee in Moscow, from the All-Union Commissariats and various trusts right up to deputy commissars tried to get into Western Belorussia. The directors of Belorussian agricultural trusts acquired light cars with small cylinder displacement and often brought them back even to the All-Union Commissars, for a price, of course, but a comparatively low one. This type of light car appeared not

21: Kolarz J-4 (no date) 1952 R1 Soviet Union
BeloRussia RC1

Democratic Republic'. The 'Centre' was reported to receive its instructions from Vilna and to recruit its membership from among 'remnants of Kulaks, White Guards and counter-revolutionary nationalists'.

According to the then First Party Secretary of Byelorussia, Gikalo, the party was forced to fight not only against an outside organization but also against nationalist agents in its own ranks. These nationalist agents, said Gikalo, had penetrated into the party in the early thirties and had apparently succeeded in occupying a large number of positions in the local government machinery. As in the Ukraine, the offensive against the nationalists inside the Communist Party was launched on the express orders of the leadership of the All-Union Communist Party. The All-Union Central Committee intervened in Minsk not only to secure the purity of communist principles in Byelorussia but also to protect in that republic the interests of Russian culture and the Russian language.

Moscow's intervention was precipitated by what became known as the 'Stsepuro Affaire'. A teacher with the name of Stsepuro had written a letter in Russian to a Byelorussian village council. Stsepuro's action led to a nationalistic outcry in which the local communist organizations and Soviet officials sided against the teacher, who in their view, ought to have written in Byelorussian. The matter was taken up by the Moscow newspaper *Pravda* and finally prompted the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party to draw attention to the 'distortion of Soviet nationalities policy' in Byelorussia. The statement of the Central Committee said that any ban against the Russian language and any persecution of persons using Russian were offences 'profitable only to the class enemy'. The Central Committee of the Byelorussian communists drew the necessary conclusions from the rebuke of the Moscow leaders and at a plenary meeting in December, 1933, proclaimed Byelorussian nationalism as the 'main danger'.[32]

Moscow had thus won the first round in the struggle against the local nationalist forces in Byelorussia. The second part of the fight reached its climax in the summer of 1937 when all prominent Byelorussian communists were charged with conducting a nationalist policy. They included Alexander Grigoryevich Chervyakov, President of the Byelorussian Soviet Republic who committed suicide, the Prime Minister, Nikolai Matveyevich Goloded and the First Party Secretary and arch-purger of 1933–34, Gikalo. Both Goloded and Gikalo were executed. The main charge directed against them was that 'they had tried to tear away the Byelorussian people from the socialist culture of the Great Russian people'. The men around Chervyakov, asserted an official publication, 'were determined to oust the Russian language from the schools, to do away with Russian revolutionary plays, with Russian belletristic literature and works of music. They thus made it difficult for

the Byelorussian people to acquire both the inexhaustible cultural treasures of the Russian people and the great cultural values created by the Socialist Revolution'. 665 186

At the same time, Stalin's opponents among the Byelorussian communists were accused of having been too liberal to the Polish minority in Byelorussia, a strange accusation from a party which professes to adhere to an internationalist ideology. The 'polonizing activities' of the Byelorussian 'Trotskyites, Bukharinites and national-fascists' consisted in having allowed a number of localities in Byelorussia to conduct their business in the Polish language and in having sanctioned the existence of a number of Polish schools.[38] 563

The purge of the Byelorussian communists terminated the policy of tolerance which the Byelorussian Government had shown towards its national minorities. This tolerance had been symbolically expressed in the coat of arms of the Byelorussian S.S.R., which contained the inscription 'Workers of the World Unite' in four languages: Byelorussian, Great Russian, Yiddish and Polish. The coat of arms in use since 1937 shows the same inscription in Byelorussian and Great Russian only. Together with the Polish inscription in Byelorussia's coat of arms the 'Polish National District' of the Byelorussian S.S.R. likewise disappeared. This district had served purposes similar to those of the 'Polish National District' of the Ukraine. It was called after Feliks Dzerzhinsky. [186]

KOLAS AND KUPALA – BYELORUSSIAN LEADERS

The history of the fight between the Kremlin and Byelorussian nationalism includes the interesting case of the two prominent poets and writers, Yanko Kupala (1882-1942) and Yakub Kolas, whom the Soviet régime drew over to the side of the 'proletarian revolution'. Both belonged to the petty bourgeois Byelorussian nationalist movement grouped around the weekly *Nasha Niva* (Our Cornfield) which long before the October Revolution was the first publication to advocate autonomy for the Byelorussian people. 186 538

Kupala was the son of an impoverished nobleman unable to pay for a higher education for his son. Kolas was of peasant origin. Kupala and Kolas had in common their violent hatred of the Polish landowners who owned over 6,000,000 acres of Byelorussian soil in 1914. As a symbolic challenge to the Poles they both threw off their Polish-sounding family names of Lutsevich and Mitskevich respectively and became known under their literary pseudonyms.

Kupala and Kolas found it difficult to overcome their 'bourgeois prejudices'. In their innermost feelings they remained nationalists however hard they tried to be 'good Soviet citizens'. In one of his poems

† [Cf. category 186, pp. 155-157 -- Analyst]